

Life Sketch of John Riley McDaniel

John Riley McDaniel was a pioneer, and the son of a pioneer of the great West.

James McDaniel and his wife Zibiah McCarley McDaniel were among the early settlers of Ohio. One of their sons, John McDaniel, a typical frontiersman born in Ohio in the year 1812, was converted to Mormonism while a young man, and moved out to Illinois where he married Miss Christine Stoker, a daughter of David and Christine Stoker. She was born in Hancock County Illinois. David and Christine Stoker were pioneers of 1852.

This couple, John and Christine McDaniel, became the parents on nine children. Their first seven of these children were born in Illinois, David and Mt. Pisgah, Iowa and Sylvester at Alpine, Utah.

Their parents came to the West in Isaac Stewart's Company in March, 1852 and settled in a little town called Mountainville—later called Alpine.

John Riley McDaniel was thirteen when he came to Utah. Being the oldest boy of the family he shared the responsibility on the pioneer life with his already experienced father. His boyhood days were spent on the farm and in the canyon where he handled the plow, the logs, the chain, and the oxen with great skill as occasion required.

Both father and sons were widely known as the most skilled axmen in the vicinity of their home. At the advanced age of 75 the "Old Whistling Chopper" died at the side of his ax on the East Mountain of Alpine.

John Riley took a brave part in the Walker War though young at the time. He assisted for weeks in the construction of the "Old Fort Wall" built in 1855. Five years later he moved to Cache Valley to join in the building of that county, but finally came back to his own people in Alpine. Here he changed his ox team for horses, and became one of the leading men to improve the farm horse through his judgment along that line. He followed afterwards farming and stock raising, and for years his farm was well kept and productive. One of the noted harvest contests was held in the East field on his excellent crop of waiving wheat.

He married Sarah Ann Watkins January 17, 1863. During their married life their home was always in Alpine. Hard working and unassuming in their lives, they yet made their little home the center of lively and sociable gatherings of the "good old days" of unity and joy. Sarah Ann died January 2, 1884 in Alpine.

In the year 1869, John Riley also married Martha Jane Watkins, and to them were born six children.

In the year 1883, the father of these two families took a trip into the new settlement on Arizona, with his brother James to look out for a new home on the frontier. After several weeks of sightseeing, he was impressed to return home. Without a word of warning he arrived home just in time to attend the funeral of his beloved wife Sarah Ann. She with six of his children were all taken within a few years. The fast succeeding blows weighed upon his declining life. He died at Alpine, July 21, 1909, at the age of seventy.